

REMARKS

Currently, claims 1-29 are presented for examination. Of these claims, claims 1, 3, 5-8, 12, 13, 18, 21, 24, 27 and 28 have been amended. Without surrender of any subject matter or change to the scope of the claims, the claim amendments have been made to correct informalities therein, and in the case of claims 1 and 21, the amendments further clarify the recitation of the invention. Support for the claim amendments can be found throughout the original disclosure and no new matter has been introduced by these amendments (See, Applicants' original disclosure, e.g., FIGS. 3-7 and corresponding description at page 13, line 11 to page 16, line 9, and at page 18, lines 14-22).

I. REQUEST FOR CONTINUED EXAMINATION (RCE)

The amendments and remarks herein are submitted in conjunction with an RCE. As such, reconsideration of the application under 37 CFR 1.116 is hereby requested.

II. CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 USC §103

In the aforementioned Office Action, claims 1-29 have been rejected under 35 USC § 103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 4,005,349 to Brian in view of U.S. Patent 4,633,418 to Prucher. However, the claim rejections do not appear to address each and every limitation in the claims. In addition, the claim rejections do not appear to show how the two references are combined to teach the claimed invention with respect to each and every one of the rejected claims. Moreover, the Examiner indicated that although "Brian does not specifically teach or suggest the use of second assemblies or carriages as claimed by the instant invention... it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have included a plurality of assemblies, paths, carriages, tools." However, there is no support for such assertions, let alone in the context of the claimed invention. Notwithstanding, Applicants believe that these references, as understood, do not support the claim rejections, singly or combined.

Specifically, claim 1 recites a system for performing a manufacturing operation relative to a first path. The system has five main elements which are recited, in part, as follows:

a plurality of first carriages...;

a plurality of first active elements...;

a raw of switching sensors for each of said first carriages, said raw being arranged along said first path, each switching sensor being operatively associated with a particular one of said first active elements so as to enable activation of that particular first active element when one of said first carriages associated with said switching sensor traverses into operative proximity of said switching sensor;

at least one controller...; and

a first tool ...;

wherein the active elements are selectively activated by the controller to independently direct the first carriages along the path so that the manufacturing operation can at least partially be conducted by the first tool.

As compared with the system recited in claim 1, the system disclosed in the Brian reference is configured differently and functions in a different way. For example, Brian discloses a plurality of sensing means attached to the carriage which are actuated by cooperating coded means disposed at specified stations along the path of the carriage's travel (Brian, e.g., at col. 9, line 58 to col. 10, line 40, and col. 11, line 47 to col. 13, lines 60). The particular address of each station is sensed by a micro-switch sensors positioned in a channel rail movable with the carriage along the path. Thus, when the strips in the coded means are approached, they engage the corresponding sensing means on the carriage to determine the station address, and detecting the desired station address causes the carriage drive motor to slow down. (Brian, e.g., at col. 10, lines 10-16 and col. 12, lines 4-13). The carriage is controllably moved automatically and independently along the path by way of the drive motor. Energizing of the drive motor is provided by the controller in accordance with a programmed sequence of the control circuit (Brian, e.g., at col. 11, lines 32-65). De-energizing the drive motor and subsequent slow down is achieved by the sensing means signaling the controller. (Id.) Stated another way, as compared with the switching sensors of the system as recited in claim 1, Brian's station address sensors are positioned differently, actuated differently, function differently for a different purpose, and achieve a different result.

As a further comparison, the Prucher reference teaches a multiple carrier control system and linear drive motors. Prucher teaches that as a carrier unit passes by an induction motor, a position indicator, which is attached to the carrier, is read by a position sensor which is located near the induction motor (Prucher, e.g., at col. 1, line 66 to col. 2,

line 15). The sensor provides position information to the control module which detects the presence or absence of the carrier (Prucher, e.g., at col. 2, lines 66). Thus, the position sensors are used for keeping track of the carriers (Prucher, e.g., at col. 2, lines 64-68). Stated another way, the position sensors in Prucher are unlike the switch sensors of claim 1, in form as well as function.

Accordingly, Prucher does not make up for Brian's deficiency, and neither one of them, singly or combined, teaches or suggests every element of the claimed invention as recited in claim 1. For this reason claim 1 is allowable over Brian and Prucher.

Claim 21, is directed to a method for performing a manufacturing operation relative to a first path. This method requires switching sensors that are configured and operate similarly to those in claim 1. Accordingly, claim 21 is allowable over Brian and Prucher for the same reasons as claim 1.

As to claim 27, the system for performing a manufacturing operation includes two paths, first path and a second paths. This system, includes four main elements as follows:

- a plurality of first active elements arranged along a first path;
- a plurality of second active elements arranged along a second path;
- at least one first carriage mounted for movement relative to the first path,...; and
- at least one second carriage mounted for movement relative to the second path,...;
- at least one controller providing independent control of the activation of each one of the first and second active elements in order to provide independent movement of each of the first and second carriages relative to the first and second paths, wherein the first and second tools cooperate to perform at least part of the manufacturing operation.

As understood, neither Brian nor Prucher teach or suggest, singly or in combination, the two-paths system of claim 27. As indicated above, the alleged knowledge in the art of such two-path system, as suggested by the Examiner, is not supported by these references, nor is there any apparent showing in the Office Action of common knowledge in the art of such system. Moreover, neither of these references, singly or combined, teaches or suggests controlling the two-path system in the manner as recited in claim 27, let alone for the purpose of having the tools cooperate to perform at

least part of the manufacturing. Accordingly, claim 27 is allowable over the cited art.

Claim 28, as recited above, is directed to a system that, to varying degrees, includes elements present in the systems of claims 1 and 21 and elements that are required by the method of claim 27. Therefore, the reasons for allowing claims 1, 21 and 27 apply with equal force and effect to claim 28.

Claims 2-20, 22-26 and 29 are allowable over the cited art for the same reasons as independent claims 1, 21, 27 and 28, from which they respectively depend.

III. CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-29. As the application is believed to be in condition for allowance, Applicants request allowance of the pending claims, 1-29.

Respectfully submitted,

DECHERT LLP

Dated: January 14, 2004

By: John W. Ryan
Leah Sherry
Reg. No. 43,918

John W. Ryan
Reg. No. 33,771

DECHERT LLP
Customer No. 38552
1775 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006-2401
Tel: 202. 261.3300
Fax: 202.261.3333

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Date: January 14, 2004

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